

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for exchanging files in a network environment, comprising:

5 a first software agent executed on a first user's computing system;

at least one additional software agent executed on at least one additional user's computing system; and

an agent server to which said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent

10 establish a connection when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems log in to said network environment, and wherein said agent server directs said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent to establish a

15 direct connection between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when files are to be shared between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems.

20 2. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 1, wherein said agent server receives a list of available files to be shared from said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems

25 log in to said network environment.

30 3. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 2, wherein when said agent server receives a file request from said first user, said

agent server matches said request to at least one additional software agent having said requested file.

4. The system for exchanging files in a network  
5 environment of Claim 3, wherein said match is based on firewall type, subnet, network or non-USA country code, and/or connection speed in order to minimize file transfer time between said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent.

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5. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 4, wherein said agent server directs said first user's software agent to open a port on said first user's computing system to listen for a connection and file request from said at least one additional user's computing systems, and directs said at least one additional user's computing system to connect to said first user's computer system.

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6. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 5, wherein if said first user's computing system receives an unexpected connection attempt or file request/transfer said open port is closed.

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7. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 4, wherein said agent server directs said at least one additional user's software agent to open a port on said at least one additional user's computing system to listen for a connection and

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file request from said first user's computing systems, and directs said first user's computing system to connect to said at least one additional user's computer system.

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8. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 5, wherein if said at least one additional user's computing system receives an unexpected connection attempt or file request/transfer said open port is closed.

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9. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 1, wherein said network environment is an Internet.

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10. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 1, wherein said first user's computing system serves as a client and said at least one additional computing system serves as a server to exchange said requested files.

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11. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 1, wherein said first user's computing system serves as a server and said at least one additional computing system serves as a client to exchange said requested files.

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12. The system for exchanging files in a network environment of Claim 1, wherein said first user makes said file request via a GUI linked to a web server

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coupled to server system operable to execute said agent server.

13. A method of exchanging files between users comprising the steps of:

5 executing a first software agent on a first user's computing system;

executing at least one additional software agent on at least one additional users computing system; and

10 executing an agent server on a network based computing system;

establishing a connection from said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems log in to said network environment;

15 directing said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent to establish a direct connection between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when files are to be shared between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems.

20 14. The method of Claim 13, wherein said agent server receives a list of available files to be shared from said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems log in to said network environment.

15. The method of Claim 13, further comprising  
the step of requesting by said first user from said  
agent server a file request wherein said agent server  
matches said request to at least one additional  
software agent having said requested file.

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16. The method of Claim 15, wherein said match is  
based on firewall type, subnet, network or non-USA  
country code, and/or connection speed in order to  
10 minimize file transfer time between said first software  
agent and said at least one additional software agent.

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17. The method of Claim 13, wherein said agent  
server directs said first user's software agent to open  
15 a port on said first user's computing system to listen  
for a connection and file request from said at least  
one additional user's computing systems, and directs  
said at least one additional user's computing system to  
connect to said first user's computer system.

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18. The method of Claim 13, wherein said agent  
server directs said at least one additional user's  
software agent to open a port on said at least one  
additional user's computing system to listen for a  
25 connection and file request from said first user's  
computing systems, and directs said first user's  
computing system to connect to said at least one  
additional user's computer system.

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19. The method of Claim 18, wherein if said at least one additional user's computing system receives an unexpected connection attempt or file request/transfer said open port is closed.

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20. A system for exchanging files in a network environment, comprising:

a first software agent executed on a first user's computing system, wherein said first user makes a file request via a GUI linked to a web server coupled to server system;

at least one additional software agent executed on at least one additional user's computing system; and

an agent server, executed on said server system,

15 to which said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent establish a connection when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems log in to said network environment, and wherein said agent server directs said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent to establish a direct connection between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when files are to be shared between said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems, and wherein said agent server receives a list of available files to be shared from said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems when said first user's and said at least one additional user's computing systems log in to said network environment,

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and wherein when said agent server receives a file request from said first user, said agent server matches said request to at least one additional software agent having said requested file, and wherein said match is based on firewall type, subnet, network or non-USA country code, and/or connection speed in order to minimize file transfer time between said first software agent and said at least one additional software agent.